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Dr. Warwick Murray

Minister of Assessment

Institute of Geography

Application for the position of: Director of the Department of New Zealand Agency for International Development

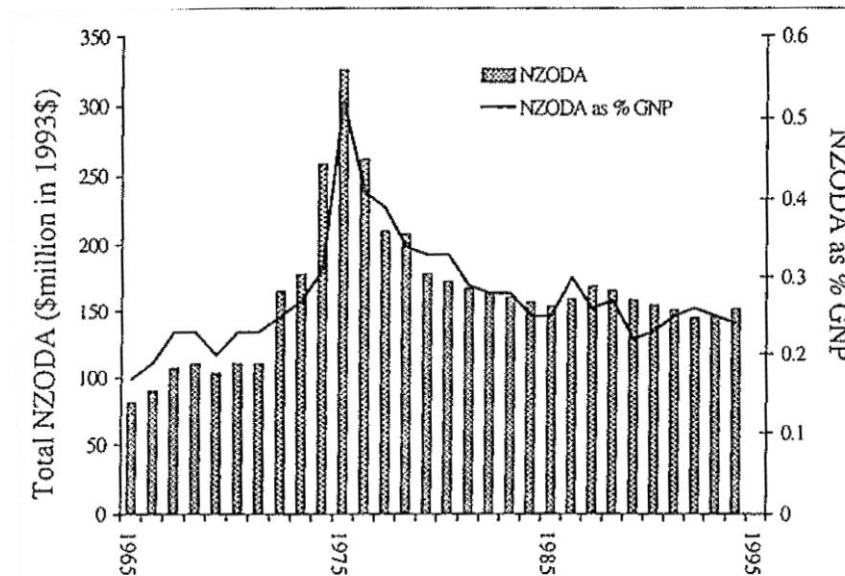
Dear Dr. Warwick

I am writing to inform you of my interest in the position for the Director of the Department of New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID). Could you please take the time to read through my application as I demonstrate my knowledge on various aid topics and put forward my opinions to you.

In the 1960's Zealand's Official Development Assistance (NZODA) was dominated by its involvement with the Colombo Plan. This plan focused on enhancing economic and social development in Southeast Asian countries (The Colombo Plan, 2010). Alongside this, New Zealand sent aid to its Pacific Island dependencies of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau. The United Nations set a target in 1970, that the net resource flows from ODA from developed countries should be 0.7 percent of Gross National Product (GNP) (OECD, 2010). As shown in Figure 1, New Zealand increased its ODA percentage up to 0.5 percent in 1975 but the 0.7 percent target was never reached. In the late 1970's aid volumes fell due to the poor health of the New Zealand economy (Scheyvens & Overton, 1995).

During the 1980's NZODA was focused on poverty reduction in the Pacific Islands. Most of this aid was in the form of general budget support. During the 1990's there was a strong neo-liberal rethink of aid. This meant putting more emphasis on the market for economic growth and decreasing the role of the state (Overton, 2010). Aid in the form of budget support was no longer the dominant type of aid and money was given directly into community projects. I think this approach had some benefits as it allowed for money to be seen as achieving something that was physically visible (like a school or church) and encouraged Pacific Island countries to open up their economies to foreign trade. However

problems began to arise as a result of this approach, including rising unemployment and falling states in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands (Overton, 2010).



**Figure 1. NZODA Volume (1965-94).** NZODA as a percentage of GNP rapidly increased during the first half of the 1970's.  
*(Source: Scheyvens & Overton, 1995, p. 196)*

At the start of the new millennium, the New Zealand government realised that something had to change and poverty elimination became the primary focus. Figure 2 shows that more focus was put on the Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, because their governments struggled to provide basic services such as primary education and health (Overton, 2009). At the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, 189 countries, including New Zealand, agreed to work together to reduce extreme poverty. The result was a creation of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) that would work towards making the world a better place in 2015 than it was in 2000 (NZ AID, 2010).

NZAID was established in 2002 as an independent agency outside of diplomatic control. It was committed to the MDG's and had a core focus on poverty reduction with the vision of a "safe and just world free of poverty" (Overton, 2009). Melanesian states were seen as being the highest poverty areas and some focus was put on Sub Saharan Africa, another high poverty region.

Ranking	1985	1990	1995	2000	2006
1	Cook Is.	Cook Is.	Cook Is.	PNG	Solomons
2	Samoa	Niue	Niue	Samoa	PNG
3	Fiji	PNG	Samoa	Indonesia	Indonesia
4	Niue	Samoa	Tokelaus	Niue	Niue
5	Tonga	Fiji	Tonga	Tokelaus	Tokelaus
6	Indonesia	Tokelaus	Tokelaus	Cook Is.	Tonga
7	PNG	Indonesia	Fiji	Solomons	Samoa
8	Tokelaus	Tonga	Indonesia	Tonga	Vanuatu
9	Vanuatu	Solomons	Solomons	Vanuatu	Cook Is.
10	Solomons	Vanuatu	Vanuatu	Fiji	Fiji

**Figure 2. Ranking of NZODA Recipients (1985-2006).** More focus is now being put on the Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, where poverty is high compared to Polynesian countries.  
(Source: Overton. 2010)

With regards sector distribution, New Zealand has put a great emphasis on basic education. Figure 3 shows that from 1999 to 2003, New Zealand increased its percentage of ODA to basic education and less emphasis was put on tertiary education. Other priority sectors include support for civil society and social infrastructure and services.

In 2005 New Zealand adhered to the Paris Declaration and adopted sector-wide approaches (SWAps). This meant that recipient governments were funded over an agreed period of time, with a single sector policy, to put in place large-scale programmes that would help reduce poverty (OECD, 2010).

NZAID has undergone some recent changes and has been an agency within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) since April 2009. Its mission is “sustainable economic development ... in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world” (NZAID, 2010). It was also decided that the Pacific region will receive an increased portion of New Zealand’s ODA and that there would be less involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Firstly, I agree with NZAID’s decision to have less involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although I think New Zealand can potentially make a great deal of difference here, it is far away geographically and it is difficult to keep a visible track on what money is actually achieving.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Total bilateral ODA to education, USD million (%)</b>	35.5	27.2	28.2	26.3	30.8
<b>Basic Education</b>	5.1	5.4	7.4	9.4	11.4
<b>Secondary Education</b>	6.0	8.1	15.7	7.8	12.3
<b>Post-Secondary Education</b>	87.0	85.1	74.0	76.0	67.4
<b>Education, Level Unspecified</b>	1.9	1.4	2.8	6.9	8.9

**Figure 3. ODA disbursements in the education sector (1999-2003).** More emphasis is being put on basic education and less emphasis is being put on post-secondary education. I believe that this should continue in the future as it helps to create knowledge equality.  
(Source: OECD, 2005)

Because NZAID is a comparatively small aid donor, its effectiveness can be increased by concentrating on a part of the world where it has the “scale, resources, people and relationships that can ... make a lasting difference in people’s lives” (NZAID, 2010). I agree with this because NZAID will be more effective by focusing on the Pacific region, than if it gave small amounts of aid into a large and distant region like Sub-Saharan Africa. NZAID’s stronger focus on the Pacific region shows that considerations such as regional security, trade and neighbourly interests are important in deciding where aid should be given (Overton, 2009). By maintaining a strong relationship with Pacific countries, New Zealand can benefit from agricultural supplies such as tropical fruits, sugar and copra. The Pacific Island countries also provide immigrants and workers for New Zealand.

I think it is great that NZAID supports the expansion of existing economies in the Pacific region, as this will create jobs and other opportunities for the Pacific’s growing population. This is a great move from NZAID because it shows that they are working towards the internationally agreed poverty reduction goals set out in the MDG’s.

To further demonstrate my knowledge on the Pacific region I would like to create a theoretical scenario: an aid budget for the Pacific region of \$400 million a year for three years. I am going to choose ten countries that I think should be given priority for aid delivery and explain why I’ve chosen them.

First of all I strongly believe that the Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands should receive the majority of aid because this is where poverty is at its highest. This is backed up by the data in Figure 4, which shows that Papua New Guinea has a very low gross primary enrolment and the under five mortality rate is relatively high. Melanesian countries are also experiencing higher population growth compared to Polynesian countries (OECD, 2005).

Kiribati is next on my aid priority list. Rising sea levels and erosion are both putting pressure on land availability. The President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2010, “conceded that his government lacks the funds to repair damage to homes in coastal areas because of erosion” (Radio New Zealand, 2010). In response to this, the New Zealand Foreign Minister, Murray Mc Cully, said that New Zealand’s aid to Kiribati is set to double and I am in favour of this.

	Aid per capita (%) 2007	Gross primary enrollment (% of relevant age group) 2007	Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000) 2007	Workers' remittances & compensation of employees received (\$ millions) 2007
Fiji	69	94	18	165.5
Kiribati	285	113	63	7.0
Marshall Islands	894	93	54	...
Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	1,035	110	40	...
Palau	1,108	99	10	...
Papua New Guinea	50	55	65	13.3
Samoa	204	95	27	119.8
Solomon Islands	501	101	70	20.4
Timor-Leste	262	91	97	...
Tonga	296	113	23	99.5
Vanuatu	251	108	34	5.5

**Figure 4. The Pacific Islands: Selected Indicators.** Melanesian countries are the highest poverty areas. Papua New Guinea has a low gross primary enrolment and both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have relatively high under 5 mortality rates. (Source: The World Bank, 2009).

The next countries on my aid priority list are the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau. This is because New Zealand has constitutional obligations in all three countries and the people of these countries are all New Zealand citizens. New Zealand is the largest donor in the Cook Islands and the economies of Niue and Tokelau are also heavily reliant on aid from New Zealand. All three of these countries share common Pacific Island issues such as lack of accessibility, run-down infrastructure and rising energy costs (NZAID, 2010).

Although most of this aid budget should be distributed amongst the Melanesian countries mentioned earlier. I also believe that Samoa should be in New Zealand's top ten priorities. This is because Samoa has a special relationship with New Zealand which was set up in the Treaty of Friendship agreed by the two countries in 1962 (NZAID, 2010). I have put Samoa in a low position on my list because it is considered to already have a well performing economy.

I have also included Fiji in my list because New Zealand also has close "people to people" ties with this country and significant bilateral development relationships are already in place here (NZAID, 2010). Fiji also has problems of income inequality and political conflict. To complete my list I have chosen Tonga. The reason I have given it least priority of my chosen ten countries is because Tonga has already made "good progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with relatively high levels of life expectancy and educational achievement" (NZAID, 2010).

I would now like to give you my personal vision on what NZAID should focus on over the next ten years. New Zealand's ODA is set increase over the next four years and the Pacific region is set to receive an increased proportion of this (NZAID, 2010). I think it is great that NZAID is maintaining its strong focus on the Pacific region where it has demonstrated that it can be most effective.

I would like to see the focus on sustainable economic growth continuing and that an increasing proportion of ODA should be allocated to activities in the following areas: infrastructure, education, law and justice, humanitarian support and environmental sustainability. Development in these areas contributes to sustainable economic development and also poverty reduction.

Environmental issues should be high in priority. This is because Pacific countries have small land areas and are vulnerable to rising sea levels and natural disasters such as cyclones. Pacific countries are highly dependent on natural resources and environmental programmes should therefore be based upon traditional methods.

I believe that education, in particular basic education for children, should be NZAID's top priority. One reason for this is because it increases equality in knowledge. I agree with NZAID when they say that knowledge is the "key to a better life," as it gives people a better understanding on health and sanitation issues, as well as a higher chance of being employed (NZAID, 2010). In my opinion education is a human right and is critical in being able to reduce poverty.

With the knowledge I have demonstrated and the opinions I have given you, I hope you will consider me for this position. Thank you for taking the time to read through my application and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

Jonathan Basile

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